

## **Mission Possible: Deaf Worker Brings Computer Skills to Vicenza**

**VICENZA, Italy** -- The U.S. Army Garrison Vicenza, Italy, continues to break down recruitment and workplace barriers with the hiring of its newest employee under the Workforce Recruitment Program for college students with disabilities. The program is sponsored by the Department of Defense and the Department of Labor.

Working as an information technology assistant in the Plans and Operations Division, Directorate of Logistics, Marc Rubin is the first deaf WRP student hired to work overseas.



“Shocked,” said Rubin, a recent graduate from the University of Texas, San Antonio, recalling his initial reaction when he was offered the job in Italy. “I had other WRP job offers when I was a student in the past, and this time I couldn’t turn down the opportunity to work in Europe. I want other deaf and hard of hearing people to know that they can work anywhere in the world.”

Rubin came to Italy knowing there would be no on-site, let alone in-country, American Sign Language interpreters. This has not proven to be a barrier though in communicating with coworkers or performing his job duties.

“Gone are the days of the old Telecommunication Device for the Deaf (TDD) keyboards,” said Cindy Pierson, Equal Employment Opportunity officer in Vicenza. “Now, there is state of the art teleconferencing technology and video remote interpreting (VRI) via broadband Internet connection.

“With the assistance from DoD’s Computer/Electronic Accommodations Program, we are using video remote interpreting services from Deaf Link® in San Antonio, Texas,” said Pierson.

Interpreting assistance is only a click away, 24-hours a day for Rubin and others who use Deaf Link.

“When Marc [Rubin] needs interpreting assistance during meetings, one-on-one conversations, or other communications needs, he simply clicks the “call” button on a remote control and is instantly connected to Deaf Link’s 24/7 call center in San Antonio, Texas,” said Deaf Link Director Dan Heller, describing how the video remote interpreting services work. “Marc sees a Deaf Link interpreter on his TV screen. When he signs to the interpreter, his comments are voiced to hearing participants through TV speakers at the meeting. When a hearing person speaks, those comments are transmitted by microphone and video camera to Deaf Link where they are signed for Marc by the interpreter.”

“We couldn’t do this without the support from the Computer Accommodations Program,” Pierson added. “CAP provides free assistive technology and accommodations for people with disabilities at all phases of their DoD employment lifecycle from recruitment and placement to promotion and retention. WRP is one of many programs, including the Wounded Service Members Program, CAP supports with assistive devices.

“We’re excited about sharing Marc Rubin’s story with deaf workers and employers all over the world,” said Pierson. “DoD and Deaf Link are working together to open up the workplace for the deaf and hard of hearing like never before.”

“It is an exhilarating experience for me,” said Rubin. “Not only for employment itself, but personally living and working in the world of unknown and living up to the challenges I encounter such as culture, social, language, and making good decisions to make my experience here more fulfilling.

“I strongly encourage all variety of disabled individuals to grab the quickest opportunity to work overseas whether it will be Europe or Pacific,” said Rubin. “It will expand a new outlook on working with people, provide career advancement opportunities, and overall, it will enrich everyone’s experiences personally and professionally.”

NOTE: For more information on DoD’s Workforce Recruitment Program visit [www.dol.gov/odep/programs/workforc.htm](http://www.dol.gov/odep/programs/workforc.htm) Story by Kelli Covlin, USAG Vicenza Public Affairs Office)